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way to the forest. If the *elima* happens to be in a village camp, as it sometimes is for part of its duration, the girls will still go away off into the forest to sing their songs. The older men and women say that the festival should be held entirely in the forest, but the younger Mbuti point out that it is an occasion for rejoicing and feasting, and so it is much better to be near a village and eat off the villagers. Even when doing that, however, one is likely to come across broken saplings stuck in the ground alongside a trail many hours from the village camp, showing that the *bamelima* passed by there, "rejoicing the forest." Sometimes they may be heard in their peculiar antiphony with the forest, at other times the saplings appear swiftly and silently a few yards from an Mbuti youth as a sign that the *bamelima* are nearby and should not be disturbed. Sometimes youths, thinking they have left the *bamelima* safely in their hut in a village camp, are hours off in the forest in their usual boisterous, noisy way, and will find themselves attacked and chased by the girls, armed with sticks and whips.

Usually the girls are all together, but every now and then one of the *elima* girls and her assistant will go off together into the forest, and stay there for half a day or more. At such times the others sit around looking dejected, and complain of being deserted. The older women then say that they should not complain, that it is good for the girl to go away sometimes and "converse with the forest."

As at birth, there is a certain amount of decoration of the body with what might be considered as forest charms, and toward the end of the festival the girls paint each other with a white forest clay. The personification of the forest, and the frequency with which it is referred to, and the way in which this is done as though its personality were an ordinary matter of fact are another indication of the intense personal importance of the forest in the life of the Mbuti, of its character as a parent, a friend, and a lover, the provider of all things. But it cannot be interpreted as forest worship, for to the Mbuti it is simply a matter of fact.

One thing that is particularly interesting in consideration of the *bamelima* is that while it is very clearly an age group, it does two things. It does not deny individuality to the *elima* girl, who in fact is constantly displaying it and often causing friction as a result, but it effectively consolidates an age group that might otherwise have been rather lacking in cohesion. Girl's activities are, on the whole, less co-operative in nature than those of boys, and whereas boys are clearly formed into co-operative groups before arriving at puberty, this is not

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quite so with the girls. But by the end of the festival bonds have been forged between the *bamelima* that will never be broken and that will provide a firm basis for co-operative activity throughout their lives.

The other thing achieved is that there seems to be at least a temporary obliteration of the bonds of the nuclear family. The nuclear family has no particular responsibility toward the festival, though they will generally contribute more food than others and may offer shelter, and it has absolutely no authority. Further, although relations between brother and sister are free at all times, it is worth noting that in the *elima* house the girls sleep with the boys of their choice openly and without shame, though their own brothers may be among the boys sleeping with other girls beside them. It is difficult, however, to determine whether or not sexual intercourse, which is permissible at this time, openly takes place under such conditions. I am told that it does.

Neither do kinship considerations seem to play any important role, and certainly no predetermined role, in the instruction of the girls. The only roles that are distinguishable as such are the provider of the *elima* hut, the mother of the *elima*, the father of the *elima*, the assistants and the rest of the *bamelima*.

Of these, the *bamelima* are without question an age group with no kinship considerations. The assistants are primarily close friends and confidantes of the *elima* girls, and seem likely to be related distantly, but there are no stated preferences concerning this. It is said that the father of the *elima* does not have to be a relative at all; his job is to use force, if necessary, to stop the somewhat violent altercations that break out among the attendant youths or between them and the *bamelima*. It is said that the mother of the *elima* is usually an elderly relative of the parental or grandparental level, and that the provider of the hut can be anyone willing to put up with the noise. Table 7a shows the kin relationship between these various roles and the *elima* girls in an *elima* held among the Epulu Mbuti at the end of 1957 and into the beginning of 1958. It also shows the relationship of those senior girls who took the most prominent part in the instruction of the *bamelima*. Tables 7b–d show the same relationships on three other occasions among other net-hunting bands.

Instruction, as already mentioned, is in song, and in such of the arts of motherhood as are yet unknown to the girls. The instructors, apart from the mother of the *elima*, are senior members of the same generation as the *bamelima*, and mostly married, or else they are el-

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After Sabani had danced around him, with the drums getting louder and louder, he was picked up and carried by a villager to the stream where the cutting was to take place. Some boys were cut in the initiation camp, others in the center of the village, and some in the stream; it depended largely on the whim of the moment. In the camp there was a scaffold on which the other boys sat while the doctor cut, but down in the stream, a short distance into the forest, Sansiwake had to stand on the rocks, the cold water splashing over his feet. He was held by the arms and legs so that he would not be able to struggle, and his considerate uncle, Masalito, clapped a hand over his mouth so that his screams would not bring him disgrace in the eyes of the villagers. But Sansiwake could not stand the pain; perhaps Sabani was drunk and cut badly. Sansiwake bit Masalito and then screamed his head off, struggling until he almost broke loose. Two days later, when he was just beginning to recover, it was decided that he would have to be cut again, as Sabani had not done as he should. Shortly afterward the weakened and thoroughly dejected boy went down with pneumonia, and would have died if the Pygmies had not broken all the rules of the initiation camp and kept him warm and well fed.

He was the only one to suffer any ill effects, and his behavior would have brought him lasting disgrace had he been a villager. The Pygmies, however, showed only consideration and sympathy for Sansiwake, and criticized the villagers openly for their unnecessary carelessness and brutality. The villagers retorted that Sansiwake's illness was only the penalty for his not having behaved himself properly.

From the moment the boys enter the camp they are meant to stand on their own feet without any help from their relatives, but the older brothers and fathers of the Pygmy boys were constantly comforting and encouraging them, at the risk of being ridiculed themselves. Masalito, in particular, was not afraid of being sneered at by the villagers. One boy, Kaoya, who was cut in the camp, was beaten as he

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made his way painfully to join the other boys, all sitting in a line on logs. Immediately after being cut they are made to sit down and join the others in singing one of the many work songs they will have to learn during the coming months. This takes their mind off the pain, which is all the more considerable because after the operation the wound is wrapped in a leaf containing a native medicine that is full of salt. Kaoya was very roughly handled, and Masalito ran up to him and put his arms around him, hugging him tight to give him strength. The villagers howled with laughter, but Masalito was more concerned with Kaoyo than with them.

Not long afterward the boys were made to dance, and then put to rest on a special bed made of split logs, laid side by side on a rough frame that kept them two feet or so off the ground. The boys lay face downward along the length of the logs, their heads resting on pillows made of plantain leaves. Over the bed there was a rough shelter, sloping down to the ground behind, but open all along the front and on two sides. From the roof was hung a sacred banana, which initiates and instructors would set swinging as an understood command for the boys to start singing. The boys were forbidden to touch the banana, being told they would die if they did.

There were all sorts of other taboos, or restrictions. To get wet, particularly by being outside when it rained, was sure to bring death. To eat certain foods was strictly prohibited. The boys had to eat without using their hands directly, spearing the food with sticks. They were forbidden to eat with their initiated relatives. The sound of the bull-roarer, a piece of wood that makes a strange whirring noise when spun around on the end of a cord, was meant to be the voice of a forest demon, and the boys had to show due respect and terror when they heard it.

During the daytime, when the villagers were present, either as instructors or just as visitors, the boys adhered faithfully to all these and many other rules. By their own rules, however, the villagers were

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During the succeeding months—usually two or three now instead of the former six or even twelve—the boys are subjected to one form of mild torture after another. The torture is sometimes mental rather than physical. For instance, one boy, whose father refused point blank to have anything to do with what he called "an empty, savage custom" but allowed his son to enter, was made to ridicule his father almost every daylight hour. The gentle little Sansiwake, who insisted on getting up from the hard wooden bed to rejoin his companions long before he was completely well, was made to pretend that he was big and strong, carrying heavy loads and imitating the performance of acts degrading to any Pygmy, but particularly so to this sensitive child. Each boy was put through some torture of this nature.

The physical ordeals sometimes start out as games but develop into cruel tests of physical endurance. A crouching dance that might be fun for a few minutes becomes agony after half an hour. A mild switching on the underside of the arm with light sticks is of no concern until, after several days, the skin becomes raw. And then the villagers notch the sticks so that they fold over and pinch the skin sharply, often drawing blood. When the boys have become used to being beaten with leafy branches, thorny bushes are substituted.

To the Pygmies this all seems harsh and unnecessary, and as far as their own children are concerned they keep a strict watch over them to see that the villagers do not go to the length that they sometimes do with village children, even if this brings them into some contempt. But to the villager this toughening-up process is essential and does not come naturally in the course of village life. The child has to be fitted for adult life, and this is what the nkumbi sets out to achieve. In a few months a boy becomes a man, tough and strong, physically and mentally. The process is not a pleasant one, but it is the only way in which, under tribal conditions, the goal can be achieved.

The Pygmy can understand and appreciate this, but the very nature of his own nomadic hunting and gathering existence provides

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all the toughening up and education that are needed. Children begin climbing trees sometimes before they can walk. Their muscles develop, and they overcome fear in a number of daring tree games. Adult activities are learned from an early age by observation and imitation, for the Pygmies live an open life. Their life is as open inside their tiny one-room leaf huts as it is in the middle of a forest clearing, and so the children have no need of the sex instruction which forms so large a part of the teaching given to village boys during the nkumbi.

The Pygmies themselves say that the toughening-up effect of the nkumbi is salutary, though they openly deplore and frequently reject its severity. And when this particular nkumbi was over, the change in every one of the eight boys was plain to see. But this is not their major reason for allowing themselves to be subjected to village initiation, nor is there any question of their being subjected by force. They enter the nkumbi voluntarily because they are a proud people. They live necessarily in contact with the villagers and spend a number of weeks every year either in a village or among villagers. The latter regard any adult who is not initiated as a child; he is treated with no more respect, accorded no more privileges, and he cannot take part in any adult activities. By entering the nkumbi the Pygmies prove their adulthood to the villagers the only way they can. When the initiation was over even Sansiwake had the right to enter any adult baraza and take part in the proceedings. This is what the Pygmies want from the nkumbi, and what they get—the status of adults in village eyes.

There are many things in their behavior to show that the nkumbi means no more than this to them, quite apart from their deliberate lack of respect for the laws of the nkumbi and their irreverence toward everything that is sacred to the villager. When this particular nkumbi was over and everyone returned to the forest, the same boys who had been walking freely among the men of the village, as men, went straight back to their mothers. They became children once more